

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 ICAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1774

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY CARACUS

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HTS CZ

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT BL

SUBJECT: PEREDA AND THE GENERALS ABORT BOLIVIA'S DEMOCRAT-
IZATION PROCESS

REF: STATE 185921 (NOTAL)

1. IN A SERIES OF DISJOINTED DECISIONS PEREDA AND BOLIVIA'S
GENERALS HAVE NOW ABORTED THE PROMISING PROCESS OF RETURN TO DEM-
OCRATIC, CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT. THE FINAL FORCING EVENT WAS THE
MILITARY UPRISING IN SANTA CRUZ IN SUPPORT OF JUAN PEREDA,
WHICH PEREDA HIMSELF JOINED IN REACTION TO THE TASTE OF
POWER AND HIS BITTERNESS AT BANZER'S MOVE TO EXTINGUISH PEREDA
POLITICALLY BY ANNULING THE JULY 9 ELECTIONS AND SETTING UP A
JUNTA AND EVENTUALLY NEW ELECTIONS. THE UPRISING FORCED AN
ALREADY UNEASY AND OFFENDED MILITARY TO PRESERVE ITS OWN
UNITY AT THE COST OF ALL OTHER INTERESTS. WITH SOME RELUCTANCE
THE MILITARY CHOSE TO PROTECT ITS UNITY BY CAVING TO
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PEREDA'S DEMANDS TO GIVE HIM THE PRESIDENCY AND KICK OUT BANZER.
IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS THE PEOPLE PROVED THEMSELVES TO BE
TIRED OF MILITARY RULE AND READY FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT.
BUT THE GENERALS PROVED TO BE UNREADY, ITIMIDATED BY A
MODEST LEFTIST VOTE, STUNG BY ANTI-MILITARY SENTIMENT
REFLECTED IN THE RETURNS, AND UNABLE TO DEAL WITH THEIR OWN
INTERNAL DIVISIONS. PEREDA AND THE GENERALS WILL NOW TRY TO

GOVERN, AGAINST FORMIDABLE ODDS.

2. NO ONE COULD PLAN A DEBACLE SO COMPLETE. BOLIVIA BACKED INTO IT BY A DAY-TO-DAY SUCCESSION OF DISJOINTED DECISIONS THAT REFLECTED NO STRATEGY OTHER THAN PUTTING THE UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES ABOVE ALL ELSE. THE P CONSISTENCY AND SELF-DEFEATING NATURE OF THIS STRING OF DECISIONS ARE APPARENT --HAVING NURSED A REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL PRE-ELECTORAL PROCESS FROM WHICH A MODERATE GOVERNMENT WAS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN TO EMERGE IN ITS OWN RIGHT OR AS A COALITION, THE MILITARY DESTROYED THE CREDIBILITY OF THE PROCESS BY ITSELF COMMITTING WIDESPREAD INTIMIDATION AND FRAUD ON ELECTION DAY.

--HAVING ALLOWED MANY INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS, THE MILITARY AND PEREDA FORCES CARRIED OUT THEIR VOTE-RIGGING EFFORTS IN A CLUMSY, HEAVY-HANDED WAY WHICH ASSURED THAT NO BOLIVIAN OR OTHER OBSERVER COULD MISS THE EXTENT OF FRAUD.

--EVEN THOUGH THE COMMON CAUSE OF STOLEN VOTES HAD UNNECESSARILY UNITED ALL THREE OPPOSITION PARTIES, A MODERATE COALITION, INCLUDING THE MILITARY'S CHOSEN JUAN PEREDA, WAS STILL POSSIBLE; BANZER HIMSELF CUT OFF THIS POSSIBILITY BY PREMATURELY FORCING ON PEREDA AND THE HIGH COMMAND A DECISION TO ANNUL THE ELECTIONS.

--THE RESPECTABLE OUTCOME OF NEW ELECTIONS STILL BEING WIDE OPEN,
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THE AIR FORCE AND SANTA CRUZ UNITS LEAPED TO CLOSE THIS OFF BY STAGING A MILITARY UPRISING AND DEMANDING THAT THE MILITARY INSTALL PEREDA AS PRESIDENT NOW.

--RATHER THAN CALMING HIS MILITARY SUPPORTERS WITH THE PROSPECT OF HIS RUNNING AGAIN IN STRAIGHT ELECTIONS, PEREDA HIMSELF DELIVERED THE COUP DE GRACE TO DEMOCRATIZATION BY GOING FOR THE GOLDEN RING OF POWER NOW, AS DE FACTO PRESIDENT, FORGETTING ABOUT ELECTIONS, CONGRESS, INAUGURATIONS AND THE OTHER TRAPPING OF LEGITIMACY.

--THE GENERALS, PROBABLY WITH SOME RELUCTANCE, CAVED COMPLETELY IN THE FACE OF THE THREAT OF ACTUAL HOSTILITIES BETWEEN THEIR DIVIDED LEGIONS.

3. THE CIVILIAN SECTOR WAS NOT BLAMELESS. CIVILIAN IN SANTA CRUZ AND COCHABAMBA QUICKLY JOINED THE MILITARY UPRISING. THE INTRANSIGENCE OF THE PARTIES OF VICTOR PAZ AND RENE BERNAL IN COALITION DISCUSSIONS WITH PEREDA MAY HAVE LED THE MILITARY AND BANZER TO DESPAIR OF A MODERATE COALITION. HERNAN SILES HUNGER STRIKE HELPED POLARIZE THE OPPOSITION AND PANIC THE MILITARY.

4. THE MILITARY HAS NOW CHOSEN TO SEEK TO PERSERVE ITS OWN UNITY AT ANY COST. AND THE COST WILL BE GREAT. FEW WILL BELIEVE THE MYTH THAT THE PEOPLE AND POLITICAL PARTIES FAILED AND THE MILITARY HAD TO SAVE THEM FROM CHAOS. THE MILITARY FAILED AND IS STRUGGLING TO SAVE ITSELF FROM CHAOS. THE MILITARY SPOILED THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, PANICKED IN THE FACE OF THE INDICATED DEPTHS OF ANTI-MILITARY FEELING AND CHOSE ANOTHER MILITARY REGIME IN PLACE OF AN ELECTED PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS. THE MILITARY, THEREFORE, HAS TAKEN NEW DISCREDIT ON ITSELF. IT MAY WELL TAKE REPRESSION TO GOVERN. THE GOVERNMENT WILL FACE MILITANT LABOR OPPOSITION, PERHAPS EVEN SABOTAGE, ESPECIALLY IN THE MINES. THE ECONOMY WILL ACCELERATE ITS SLIDE AND FOREIGN CREDITS WILL DROP. THE POLITICAL PARTIES MAY BE UNWILLING TO COOPERATE WITH AN ILLEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT AND
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THE LEFT WILL PROBABLY SOON BE IN EXILE AGAIN.

5. TYPICALLY, HOWEVER, THE GENERALS AND PEREDA WILL FACE THE IMPLICATIONS OF TODAY'S MISTAKES TOMMORROW, AND PROBABLY MEET THEM WITH NEW ONES.

6. WHAT SHOULD OUR REACTION BE DESPITE PEREDA'S AND THE GENERALS' BUNGLING WE ARE LEFT WITH A DELICATE LINE TO WALK BETWEEN NOT CONDONING ELECTORAL FRAUD AND AN ILLEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT, ON THE ONE HAND, AND NOT DRIVING THE PEREDA GOVERNMENT INTO GREATER ISOLATION, PARANOIA AND REPRESSION, ON THE OTHER HAND. THIS WILL NOT BE AN EASY LINE TO WALK. WE HAVE TO EXPRESS OUR DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE DERAILING OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS. JUST AS WE COULD NOT CONDONE ELECTORAL FRAUD, WE CANNOT CONDONE ABORING THE PROCESS OF RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC RULE. WE HAVE TO BE CLEAR THAT ONE DE FACTO GOVERNMENT HAS REPLACED ANOTHER; THERE IS NO LEGITIMACY TO PEREDA'S LINE THAT HE HAS THE PEOPLE'S MANDATE TO RULE.

7. YET, WE DO NOT HAVE ALL THE FACTS ON WHAT PEREDA'S GOVERNMENT WILL BE LIKE. HE WILL SEEK PARTICIPATION OF THE CIVILIAN PARTIES IN HIS GOVERNMENT, AND PROBABLY GET VERY LITTLE. HE HAS STRUCK A CONCILIATORY TONE IN HIS INITIAL STATEMENTS BUT ALSO SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL NOT TOLERATE "EXTREMIST AND DESTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION," WHICH MAY MEAN THE FORCES OF HERNAN SILES, THE RUNNER-UP IN THE JULY 9 ELECTIONS. WE NEED TO CLARIFY PEREDA'S PERSONAL VIEWS ON THE ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH WE SUSPECT THEY WILL BE THAT NO ELECTIONS ARE NEEDED FOR FOUR MORE YEARS. PEREDA MAY TRY TO MAINTAIN MOST OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS OF THE LAST YEAR--MUCH OF WHICH WAS HIS WORK--BUT HE MAY WELL FACE STRIDENT LABOR AND POLITICAL PARTY OPPOSITION THAT COULD LEAD TO A REVERSAL.
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8. OUR PUBLIC REACTION FOR NOW SHOULD COMBINE OUR DIS-APPOINTMENT WITH HOPES THAT THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS WILL BE RESUMED SHORTLY AND THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS OF THE LAST YEAR WILL BE MAINTAINED.

9. RECOGNITION SHOULD BE LARGELY A TECHNICAL MATTER. THE MILITARY HAS CLEARLY HANDED POWER TO PEREDA AND HIS GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE IN CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY. THE OPPOSITION IS NOT LIKELY TO TRY A VIOLENT OVERTHROW. EVERYONE SEEMS TO WANT TO AVOID VIOLENCE, WE SHOULD NOT BE THE FIRST TO RECOGNIZE PEREDA'S GOVERNMENT NOR DO IT WITH ANY FANFARE, BUT TAKE IT AS A LIECPNCAO AND LARGELY AUTOMATIC STEP WHICH HAS HAPPENED BY MONDAY.

10. REGARDING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, WHEREAS A JUNTA HEADING TOWARD NEW ELECTIONS MAYHAVE DESERVED THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT, PEREDA DOES NOT. WE SHOULD SUSPEND ACTION ON ANY FY 78 ASSISTANCE AID AND FMSL UNTIL PEREDA'S OWN INTENTIONS ON ELECTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ARE CLEARLY STATED TO US. WE MAY HAVE TO CANCEL THESE AID PLANS FOR THIS YEAR, BUT THIS MOVE, IF WE HAVE TO MAKE IT, SHOULD BE A REACTION TO PEREDA'S ACTIONS ON NEW ELECTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS NOT HIS COMING TO POWER AS SUCH. WE SHOULD TELL PEREDA THAT WE ARE SUSPENDING THESE FY78 AID PLANS PENDING CLARIFICATION OF HIS PLANS FOR NEW ELECTIONS AND FOR TREATMENT OF THE OPPOSITION AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS GENERALLY.

11. PEREDA HAS ASKED EDWIN TAPIA TO MEET WITH THE AMBASSADOR INFORMALLY AT 5 PM TODAY AND WE SHOULD KNOW MORE OF THIS GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS THEN.
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Message Attributes

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